



## **Tying Odysseus to the Mast: Using the Research on Online Reading to Resist the Call of New Educational Technologies**

**Randy Connolly**

Mount Royal University (Canada)

[rconnolly@mtroyal.ca](mailto:rconnolly@mtroyal.ca)

### **Abstract**

For much of the past fifteen years, educators have been encouraged to adopt (and adapt to) online technologies. While educators have often had reservations about new technologies replacing old technologies, educators do not always have the opportunity to fully examine the evaluative research on new education technologies. Indeed, quite often evaluating a new education technology is only possible after it has been adopted. Thus educators are frequently initially encouraged to adopt a new technology not by research demonstrating its merits, but by a series of metaphors or analogies comparing the new unknown technology to an old and trusted one. Yet even if research ultimately emerges that is critical of the new technology, by then it is too late; institutional inertia and interest politics make it difficult to un-adopt a technology.

This paper, which is based on a book in progress, summarizes a wide range of research in fields as diverse as web usability, psychology, physiology, cognitive science, education, political science, media studies, and technology and society studies on the education impact of online reading. This evidence is quite consistent in finding that a wide range of deleterious outcomes are associated with the replacement of paper reading with the online consumption of text. The paper will conclude by trying to provide an alternative set of metaphors and analogies that may help educators in resisting the siren call of the next new educational technology.